Mercury-free alternatives

3924. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether globally there is a shift towards mercury-free alternatives and strict regulations are in place on mercury emissions but in India such safeguards and regulations for handling mercury are non-existent;

(b) whether a mercury thermometer containing 5 gms. of mercury is enough to contaminate a 20-acre lake;

(c) whether the health sector in India, particularly hospitals and dental clinics release substantial quantities of mercury every year without any precautions and disposed of like general waste; and

(d) whether Government have any action plans to phase out mercury-based equipments from hospitals?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) Countries like Norway, Sweden, Denmark and some States of USA have policies restricting manufacture and sale of mercury based thermometers. In India, the effluent standards notified as well as the Hazardous Waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 1989 as amended in 2003, and the Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemicals Rules, 1989 notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, regulate disposal and prescribe safeguards for handling of mercury.

(b) The general effluent standard for discharge into inland surface water as notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 in respect of mercury is 0.01 milligram per liter.

(c) and (d) The mercury bearing wastes irrespective of the source of generation (*i.e.* hospitals, industries, etc.) containing mercury and mercury compounds equal to or more than 50 mg/kg are required to be disposed of as per the provisions of the Hazardous Waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 1989 as amended in 2003.

The State Pollution Control Boards/Pollution Control Committees of Union Territories have been asked by the Central Pollution Control Board

to ensure collection/disposal of mercury and mercury bearing wastes from the healthcare facilities as per the Hazardous Wastes (Management & Handling) Rules, 1989 as amended in 2003.

Smuggling of timber in North-Eastern States

†3925. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the smuggling of timber in a huge quantity from the North-Eastern States has been going on;

(b) if so, the details of the seized timber during the last three years, and

(c) the details of the revenue earned from the timber year-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Details of Timber seized in the North-Eastern-States and Revenue earned during the period 2001-02 to 2003-04 are as under:—

Year	Volume of timber seized (in cum.)	Revenue earned (Rs. in lakh)
2001-02	13881.3961	269.089
2002-03	12740.344	306.38
2003-04	10322.8335	309.836

Melting of Himalayan Glaciers

3926. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the global warming is seriously threatening the Himalayan Glaciers;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the Indian Space Scientists have gathered a concrete evidence which shows that four glaciers in Baspa basin are on the verge of disappearance;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.